

Sessional Use of PPE

19th May 2020



SUNDERLAND CARE AND SUPPORT issued '**Guidance on the Sessional use of PPE within Residential Settings**' on 13th May 2020. This is a summary of the guidance and all SCAS staff should ensure they read the full guidance.

In recent weeks the sessional use of PPE has been widely debated and guidance has been provided as to how to safely and effectively use PPE in an efficient and considered way.

Aprons and gloves remain single use only, but masks and eye protection can be worn for a session, as detailed by individual and service-specific risk assessment.

Within SCAS all PPE utilised within the community remains subject to single use - This is because the support of customers in the community results in the transfer of colleagues between numerous environments, thus increasing the risk of cross-infection.

Residential services, where colleagues will work the duration of their shift in one environment, can implement the use of sessional PPE as per the guidance detailed below.

What is a session?

A single session refers to a period of time where a care worker is undertaking duties in a specific setting or exposure environment.

Within residential services, the period of duty between your breaks is the equivalent to what is referred to as a “session”. We recommend you use face masks and eye protection continuously until you need to take a break or otherwise remove it (e.g. to drink, eat, at your break time or end of shift), both to reduce risk to you and to make it easier for you to conduct your usual work without unnecessary disruption.

The duration of a session is not specified, the appropriateness of single or sessional use is dependent on the nature of the task and the above guidance.

The duration (number of hours) of sessional use is dependent on local and individual factors, for example, heat, activity length, shift-length. While the ‘How to Work Safely in Care Homes’ guidance document advises facemasks can be worn for up to 8 hours, in practice, usage will generally vary from 2 to 6 hours.

You can wear the same face mask and eye protection between residents whether or not they have symptoms of COVID-19.

Sessional use: Appropriate PPE

Single use - Aprons and gloves are subject to single use with disposal and hand hygiene after each contact.

Sessional use - Surgical masks and eye protection can be subject to sessional use.

The aim of wearing a face mask is to protect your mouth and nose from a resident’s respiratory secretion (e.g. when they cough or sneeze). Wearing a face mask also protects residents by minimising the risk of passing on infection from yourself (via secretions or droplets from your mouth, nose, and lungs) to residents when you are caring for them.

There is no evidence to suggest that replacing face masks and eye protection between each resident would reduce the risk of infection to you. In fact, there may be more risk to you by repeatedly changing your face mask or eye protection as this may involve touching your face unnecessarily. The rationale for recommending sessional use in certain circumstances is therefore to reduce the risk of inadvertent indirect transmission.

When to remove and replace sessional PPE

When you take a break or otherwise need to, you should remove your face mask and eye protection and replace it with a new face mask for your next duty period. You must ensure your eye protection is appropriately cleaned when you remove it/ before next use.

There may be circumstances where you would need to remove and replace your face mask or eye protection before your break or you otherwise feel you need to. A facemask should be discarded and replaced and NOT be subject to continued use in any of the following circumstances:

- if damaged
- if soiled (e.g. with secretions, body fluids)
- if damp
- if uncomfortable
- if difficult to breathe through.

You should not touch your face mask unless it is to put on or remove it.

The following Public Health England documents have been referenced to provide the information in this briefing:

- [**COVID-19: infection prevention and control guidance \(updated 27.04.20\).**](#)
- [**Working safely in care homes \(updated 27.04.20\).**](#)